DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 913 EC 182 910

AUTHOR Smith, Bert Kruger
TITLE "Wilted Flower" Syndrome.
PUB DATE 16 Mar 86
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (23rd, New York, NY, March 12-15, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adjustment (to Environment); *Adults; *Interpersonal Competence; *Learning Disabilities; *Social Development

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the social aspects of learning disabilities (LD) in adults, noting the role of the early imprinting process which may influence them throughout their lives. It is noted that LD adults have missed learning social skills that involve a sensitivity to subtlety, an awareness of voice tones, and a realization of time and other people's moods. Ways in which inadequate social skills set LD adults apart from their peers are described. The paper advocates a mental health approach to such socialization problems in which individuals gradually assume responsibility for themselves and learn to reach out to others. (CL)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Bert Kruger Smith

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED270913

Bert Kruger Smith
1986 ACLD International Conference
New York, New York
March 16, 1986

# "WILTED FLOWER" SYNDROME

## I. INTRODUCTION

ACLD MEET ALWAYS LIKE HOMECOMING.

PEOPLE & PURPOSE WORTHWHILE.

HOPE WE CAN EXPLORE TOGETHER SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH ADULTS WHO HAVE L.D. CAN OVERCOME DEFICITS & LIVE PRODUCTIVE & MEANINGFUL LIVES.

YOU KNOW ANSWERS - MANY OF YOU - BETTER THAN I. JEWISH SAYING, "If you want to know where the pain is, ask the patient not the doctor." PEOPLE HERE HAVE FELT THAT PAIN MORE PERSONALLY THAN I.

(ASK: HOW MANY HERE FOR PROFESSIONAL REASONS ONLY?
HOW MANY PERSONAL ON BEHALF OF OTHERS?
HOW MANY SELF?)

LET ME BEGIN BY TALKING ABOUT JUST TWO OF THE THOUSANDS OF ADULTS WITH L.D.

## CHARLOTTE

1. PRETTY AS A LITTLE ROSE - SAID HER GRANDMA - WHEN SHE WAS BORN.
2. DYSLEXIC - BUT THRU HI-SCHOOL, COMMUNITY COLL.
3. TRIED - ALWAYS TRYING. IN FACT - DIDN'T MAKE A LOT

EC182910

OF FRIENDS - STAYED AWAY FROM MUCH DATING, EVER SINCE THE DATE WHEN SOPHISTICATED JOHNNY TOOK HER TO A SWANK RESTAURANT; & SHE COULD NOT READ THE MENU WELL; AND ORDERED INAPPROPRIATELY. ENERGIES WENT INTO TRYING TO MAKE IT THRU SCHOOL. LEARNED COMPUTER PROGRAMMING - LOST JOB BECAUSE OF POOR SPELLING.

4. CHARLOTTE LOOKS LESS THAN PRETTY NOW. HER MOUTH DROOPS; HER HAIR HANGS LIMP; HER MAKEUP IS UNBECOMING. NO LONGER "A LITTLE ROSE," CHARLOTTE NOW LOOKS LIKE A WILTED FLOWER.

DO YOU KNOW CHARLOTTE?

MONTY

MONTY WILTED LONG BEFORE CHARLOTTE.

DROPPED OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL. GOT JOB WITH CONSTRUCTION CREW. MADE GOOD MONEY, BUT HAD LITTLE JUDGMENT ABOUT SPENDING IT. NEVER COULD LEARN BASIC MATH - IN FACT, SO HYPERACTIVE THAT HE NEVER LEARNED MUCH OF ANYTHING ACADEMICALLY.

MARRIED HILDA - FRIEND FROM SCHOOL - SOMEONE WHO SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND HIS NEEDS. SHE ONLY 17.

MARRIAGE GOOD. FIRST YEAR ANYWAY. THEY LIVED IN A LITTLE APT. MADE LOVE A LOT. WERE HAPPY.

BUT HILDA GREW OLDER, AND HILDA BECAME PREGNANT.

THEN TROUBLES BEGAN. MONTY STILL MADE GOOD MONEY - WHEN HE WORKED. HE SPENT MORE THAN HE MADE - ALWAYS. BEER WITH

THE BOYS AFTER WORK. PRESENTS FOR HILDA. CANNED CAVIAR AND BIG STEAKS.

ALL OF HIS "CANNOTS" ROSE TO THE SURFACE - PROBLEMS IN MAKING APPROPRIATE CHOICES, IN SEPARATING SIGNIFICANT FROM INSIGNIFICANT, IN LEARNING TO DO SOME NECESSARY TASKS, IN UNDERSTANDING APPROPRIATE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR.

MONTY MAY NOT HAVE BEEN A DESIGNATED FLOWER, BUT HE WAS WILTED BY THE TIME HE & HILDA WERE DIVORCED.

(ASK: DO YOU KNOW CHARLOTTE OR MONTY OR HILDA?
WHAT INTERVENING TECHNIQUES MIGHT HAVE HELPED?
WHAT DO CHARLOTTE & MONTY SHARE IN COMMON, OTHER THAN THEIR MUTUAL DISABILITIES?)

II. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PRESENTING DISABILITIES AS PEOPLE WITH L.D. GROW OLDER?

ALL OF US ARE TOUCHED BY LEARNING DISABILITIES IN SOME FASHION. ALL OF US KNOW THAT LEARNING DISABILITIES DO NOT EXIST SIMPLY IN THE CLASSROOM OR EVEN IN THE OFFICE. THE PROBLEMS WHICH STARTED IN EARLY CHILDHOOD MAY FOLLOW A PERSON ALL THROUGH LIFE. THEY MAY SHOW UP IN THE BOARD ROOM OR IN THE BEDROOM. IT IS ABOUT THE SOCIAL ASPECTS, THE RELATIONSHIPS, AND THE OUTREACH WHICH WE SHALL TALK TODAY. WHEN I SPOKE WITH A GROUP OF ADULTS WHO WERE LEARNING DISABLED, THEY EXPRESSED THEIR OWN FEELINGS ABOUT LIFE. ALMOST EVERYONE OF THEM TALKED OF ISOLATION, OF LACK OF COMPETENCE IN SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS,

OF LACK OF ASSURANCE REGARDING VARIOUS SITUATIONS. THEY DISCUSSED MORE ABOUT THOSE FACTORS THAN THEY DID ABOUT THE DISABILITY ITSELF. ONE HUSBAND SPOKE OF PROBLEMS IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS, IN GIVING OR ATTENDING PARTIES, IN ORGANIZING HOUSEHOLD SITUATIONS.

THIS WEEK I ATTENDED OLDER WORKERS' FIESTA - CELEBRATING A PROGRAM TO HELP OLDER, DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE GET JOBS.

WHAT DID WE LEARN IN TALKING WITH PERSONS MANAGING THE PROGRAMS?

THE DIFFICULTIES WERE NOT IN THE LACK OF SKILLS SO MUCH AS IN THE LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THESE OLDER PEOPLE. HAVING KNOWN SO MANY REBUFFS, THEY NOW WERE AFRAID TO TRY.

DO WE SEE SOME ANALOGIES HERE?

LET ME GIVE YOU ONE OTHER EXAMPLE --- THIS TIME FROM A CHILDREN'S CANCER CENTER WHERE YOU WOULD THINK ALL EMPHASIS WOULD BE ON THE PHYSICAL HEALTH OF THE CHILD.

THE DOCTORS WROTE: "SELF-IMAGE IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO CHILDREN IN ORDER FOR THEM TO GROW INTO NORMALLY FUNCTIONING MEMBERS OF SOCIETY....

"THE PARENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CHILD WITH CANCER CAN BE VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WAS BEFORE THE DIAGNOSIS. FAMILY STABILITY AND RESOURCES CAN BE SEVERELY TAXED, AND THE SIBLING CAN BE AFFECTED SIGNIFICANTLY, AS WELL."

IF WE SUBSTITUTED "LEARNING DISABILITIES" FOR "CANCER," WOULD WE NOT BE SAYING THE SAME WORDS? ARE WE NOT ALL

TALKING ABOUT THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO LEARN TO HAVE THE QUALITIES TO HELP THEM GROW INTO SELF-LOVING AND CARING ADULTS? LET ME READ YOU A FEW MORE PARAGRAPHS FROM THIS PROPOSAL:

"WHEN THE DIAGNOSIS IS KNOWN, IT MUST BE ASSIMILATED AND INCORPORATED INTO BEING. THE NORMALIZATION OF LIFE AFTER THE DIAGNOSIS DEPENDS ON THE FAMILY'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONCEPT THAT HAVING CANCER IS NORMAL. WITHOUT THIS ACCEPTANCE, THERE IS DESPAIR: TO WANT TO BE WHAT ONE CANNOT BE AND NOT WANT TO BE WHAT ONE IS.

"THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF REHABILITATION IS APPROPRIATE SOCIAL FUNCTION. SINCE CHILDREN ARE IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING FUTURE SOCIAL FUNCTION, ADDRESSING THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS GENERATED FROM CANCER MUST BE AN ONGOING PROCESS TO ALLOW A WELL-ADJUSTED, CURED CHILD. THE ARENAS OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF SPECIAL CONCERN ARE HOME, SCHOOL, AND AT A LATER DATE, MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS. THE CHILD'S PLACE IN SOCIETY IS DETERMINED LARGELY BY THE HOME AND THOSE SOCIAL CONTACTS SANCTIONED BY THE HOME: CHURCH, ORGANIZED GROUP ACTIVITIES, AND NEIGHBORHOOD OF RESIDENCE.

"AN UNDERLYING PROBLEM IN THE SOCIAL REHABILITATION OF THE CHILD WITH CANCER IS THE UNWILLINGNESS OF SOCIETY TO CONSIDER HAVING HAD CANCER AS ACCEPTABLE. THE REAL PROBLEM, HOWEVER, REMAINS THE CHILD'S SELF-IMAGE. THE CHILDREN MUST ACCEPT THEMSELVES AS THEY ARE. THE IMMEDIATE IMAGE-SHAPING FACTS OF THE

CHILD'S ENVIRONMENT ARE FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND LATER, A LIFE PARTNER WHO MUST ALSO ACCEPT THE INDIVIDUAL THE WAY HE OR SHE IS.

"CHILDREN LEARN HOW TO BEHAVE FROM THOSE AROUND THEM, EITHER FAMILY MEMBERS OR MEMBERS OF THE THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY. MANY FAMILIES SEE ONLY THE CHILD'S DISTURBED BEHAVIOR. SUCH CHILDREN MAY BE COMPLETELY NORMAL, BUT THEIR ENVIRONMENT REQUIRES ABNORMAL ADJUSTMENTS.

"FOR MARRIAGES TO SUCCEED, PARTNERS MUST BE AT EASE WITH THEMSELVES. IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE MADLADJUSTED AND TO LIVE ON THE FRINGES OF SOCIETY WITHOUT PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, SUCH RELUNCTANT PARTICIPATION DOES NOT WORK IN MARRIAGE. THEREFORE, PREPARATION TOWARD LIFETIME PARTNERSHIP MUST BE ANTICIPATED AND SUPPORTED. THE CIRCUMSTANCE OF MARRIAGE PRECIPITATES CRISES OF MALADJUSTMENT THAT MIGHT NOT BE OTHERWISE APPARENT."

III. WHERE DO THE DIFFICULTIES BEGIN?

SOME INTERESTING STUDIES HAVE BEEN DONE ON IMPRINTING. ALTHOUGH THE EXPERIMENTS HAVE OCCURRED ON ANIMALS, THE LESSONS MAY BEAR REPEATING IN TERMS OF PEOPLE. FOR EXAMPLE, PIAGET, GESELL, AND ALSO FREUD HAVE TALKED ABOUT THE SEQUENCES OF MATURATION AND THE READINESS OF THE ORGANISM FOR LEARING CERTAIN SKILLS AND FOR ACQUIRING INCREASINGLY COMPLEX KNOWLEDGE AT CERTAIN STAGES AND AGES DURING THEIR CHILDHOOD. LET ME GIVE YOU JUST ONE EXAMPLE. BIRDS CAN LOSE THEIR INSTINCTUAL SKILL

OF NEST-BUILDING IF THEY ARE INTERFERED WITH IN THE FOLLOWING WAY. IF THE MATERIALS FOR NEST-BUILDING ARE TAKEN OUT OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT AT THE NORMAL TIMES WHEN THEY BUILD NESTS PRIOR TO GIVING BIRTH TO THEIR YOUNG, THEY ARE UNABLE LATER TO DO THE JOB WELL EVEN IF THEY ARE GIVEN THE MATERIAL. (HARRY HARLOW EXPERIMENTS.)

CAN THE SAME INABILITY TO COMPLETE SOME SOCIALLY "NORMAL" TASKS APPLY TO OUR L.D. YOUNG PEOPLE?

DR. RENE DUBOS, THE PULITZER PRIZE WINNING AUTHOR OF SO HUMAN AN ANIMAL, HAS WRITTEN THAT THE HUMANNESS OF MAN STARTS QUITE EARLY, AND IMPORTANT PARTS OF PERSONALITY DEVELOP EVEN BEFORE THE CHILD IS SCHOOL AGE. HE SAYS THAT A NEWBORN HUMAN TODAY IS REALLY NOT DIFFERENT FROM WHAT HE WOULD HAVE BEEN IF HE HAD BEEN BORN THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO IN THE STONE AGE, BUT THE CONTACT WITH HIS 20th CENTURY MOTHER AND OTHERS MAKES FOR A PROCESS OF ACCULTURATION WHICH DOES INDEED CHANGE THE WAY HE DEVELOPS.

ALL OF US REALIZE THAT WE ARE DIFFERENT, MORE THAN A SET OF ORGANISMS TO BE IMPRINTED OR MANIPULATED. WE ARE EACH ONE OF A KIND HUMAN BEINGS ATTEMPTING TO REACH OTHER HUMAN BEINGS ACROSS THE CAVERNS OF OUR LONLINESS. IF WE HAVE SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES SUCH AS LEARNING DISABILITIES, WE HAVE, IN A SENSE, AN ADDED DISTANCE TO TRAVEL. THE IDEA MAY BEST BE DESCRIBED IN DR. MARTIN BUBER'S PHILOSOPHY CONCERNING THE "I-THOU" PHILOSOPHY. LET ME QUOTE DIRECTLY AS FOLLOWS: "THE CREATURE

CAPABLE OF ENTERING INTO LIVING RELATION WITH THE WORLD AND THINGS, WITH MEN BOTH AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS THE MANY, AND WITH THE MYSTERY OF BEING WHICH IS DIMLY APPARENT THROUGH ALL THIS BUT INFINITELY TRANSCENDS IT.... THAT ESSENCE OF MAN WHICH IS SPECIAL TO HIM CAN BE DIRECTLY KNOWN ONLY IN A LIVING RELATION."

THUS WE SEE THAT EACH PERSON REACTS IN RELATION TO OTHER PEOPLE, HIS PERCEPTION IS COLORED BY WHAT HE HAS LEARNED AND FELT AND EXPERIENCED. THE STORY IS TOLD THAT FOUR PAINTERS STARTED OUT TO PAINT THE SAME THEME, A LANDSCAPE IN TIVOLI NEAR ROME. ALL OF THEM KNEW ONE ANOTHER, HAD SIMILAR BACK-GROUNDS, AND HAD STUDIED IN THE SAME SCHOOL OF ART. THEY ALL AGREED TO PAINT THE LANDSCAPE AS CLEARLY AS THEY COULD AND AS FAITHFULLY. STILL, THE RESULT WAS THAT WHEN THE PICTURES WERE COMPARED, THEY WERE ALL UNIQUELY DIFFERENT.

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT IT IS NOT THE EQUATION WITH MATH THAT BEATS MANY DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE, BUT THE EQUATION WITH LIVING THAT IS SO DEVASTATING FOR THEM. I AM ONLY REPEATING WHAT ALL OF US KNOW WHEN I SAY HOW IMPORTANT IT IS THAT THE "CANS" RATHER THAN THE "CANNOTS" BE STRESSED FOR ALL PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES. HOW CAN THEY LEARN TO SOCIALIZE WITH OTHER HUMAN BEINGS IF THEY FEEL THEMSELVES TO BE CONSTANTLY INADEQUATE AND DISABLED?

JUST AS WE HAVE SEEN IN THE IMPRINTING PROCESS FOR SMALL ANIMALS, WE FEEL THAT THERE MUST BE SUCH IMPRINTING PROCESS

WHICH MAY GO ON FOR LEARNING DISABLED PEOPLE AND WHICH MAY IN A SENSE INFLUENCE THEM THROUGHOUT THEIR LIFETIME.

MANY OF THE SOCIAL SKILLS INVOLVE A SENSITIVITY TO SUBTLETY, AN AWARENESS OF TONES OF VOICE, A REALIZATION OF TIME AND OTHER PEOPLE'S MOODS. OFTEN THE LEARNING DISABLED PERSONS HAVE "SKIPPED" THAT PERIOD OF LEARNING OR HAVE BEEN SO BUSY COPING WITH OTHER KINDS OF NEEDED SKILLS THAT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP OR ACQUIRE THE KIND OF SENSITIVE RESPONSE WHICH IS DEMANDED IN MANY SOCIAL SITUATIONS.

IT HAS BEEN FOUND WITH RETARDED YOUNG PEOPLE THAT VERY OFTEN PEOPLE WITH A LOW I.Q. COULD FUNCTION IN A JOB OR SOCIAL SITUATION IF THEY HAD BEEN TAUGHT THE SKILLS THAT WERE NECESSARY TO CARRY THEM THROUGH THE KIND OF PERSONAL INTERACTION WITH OTHER PEOPLE, EVEN IF THEY WERE NOT GOOD AT THE LEARNING PROCESS. MAYBE WE HAVE NOT PAID ENOUGH ATTENTION TO THIS ASPECT OF THE LIFE OF LEARNING DISABLED PERSONS AND NEED TO SET OURSELVES TO THE TASK OF TEACHING IN JUST THAT AREA.

SOMETIMES NOT UNDERSTANDING HUMOR MIGHT BE ENOUGH TO SET SUCH A PERSON IN A BAD LIGHT IN A SOCIAL SITUATION. NOT BEING ABLE TO READ A PERSON'S FACIAL EXPRESSION ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THE RESPONSE THAT THE OTHER PERSON IS MAKING TO A STATEMENT MIGHT TURN AWAY A PERSON WHOM A LEARNING DISABLED PERSON IS TRYING TO REACH.

STORY OF L.D. WOMAN RAPED --- DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MAN'S MOTIVES.

QUITE OFTEN THE INABILITY TO GAIN INFORMATION FROM AUDITORY OR VISUAL SOURCES MAY MAKE THIS PERSON LOSE THE TREND OR THE THEME OF A "HAPPENING."

FOR ANY PERSON -- AND PERHAPS MOST DESPERATELY FOR THE YOUNG PERSON WHO IS JUST BEGINNING TO FIND HIS WAY IN A SOCIAL WORLD -- A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EVERYDAY PROCEDURES IS DEVASTATING.

IF THE LEARNING DISABLED PERSON DEMONSTRATES CLUMSINESS IN ATHLETIC SITUATIONS, OR SHOWS OTHER DISABILITIES, SUCH AS THE LACK OF BEING ABLE TO READ A MENU OR KNOW HOW TO MAKE CHANGE AT A MOTION PICTURE OR UNDERSTAND EXACTLY HOW TO ACT GOING OUT TO DINNER AT A RESTAURANT, THESE INABILITIES ARE ENOUGH TO SET HIM OFF AND APART FROM HIS PEERS.

ALL OF US RECOGNIZE THAT WE HAVE AREAS OF FRUSTRATION, THAT WE OFTEN COMPENSATE FOR OUR FRUSTRATIONS OR OUR INADEQUANCIES, THAT WE SOMETIMES OVER-COMPENSATE, AND THAT WE OCCASIONALLY MAY OVERREACT TO STIMULI. WE ALL HAVE OUR ADJUSTMENT MECHANISMS WHICH WE CALL UPON TO HELP US COPE WITH OUR DAILY LIVES. WE MAY COMEPNSATE, OR OVERCOMPENSATE, FOR OUR LACK OF HEIGHT OR LACK OF MONEY, OR LACK OF BRAINS OR LACK OF SOCIAL GRACES. WE MAY FIND VARIOUS KINDS OF ESCAPE MECHANISMS. WE MAY WALK OUT ON UNPLEASANT SITUATIONS OR DELAY THEM INDEFINITELY, OR CARRY ON OUR FANTASIES IN MAGAZINES OR MOTION PICTURES, OR DAY-DREAMING.

OR, WE MAY REGRESS, BACK TO A PERIOD WHEN WE WERE HAPPY AND WITHOUT PROBLEMS. IF THAT PERIOD HAPPENS TO BE THE TIME WHEN WE WERE AN INFANT, WE MAY SPEND ALL OF OUR TIME WITH FOOD IN

OUR MOUTHS AND MAY THEN BE PRIME CANDIDATES FOR WEIGHT WATCHERS OR WHATEVER WEIGHT LOSING MECHANISM IS CURRENTLY PROPULAR.

WE MAY RATIONALIZE OUR FAILURES OR LAZINESS OR TEMPER. OR, WE MAY PROJECT OUR OWN FEELINGS ON TO SOMEONE ELSE. WE MAY SAY THAT SOMETHING WILL NOT WORK WHEN WE MEAN, DEEP DOWN, THAT WE CANNOT MAKE IT WORK. WE MAY BUILD UP ALL KINDS OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS TO PERMIT US TO ESCAPE OR WITHDRAW.

WE MAY BECOME AGGRESSIVE, OR WE MAY REPRESS UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCES.

ALL OF US ARE AWARE, PERHAPS DIMLY, OF THE VARIOUS MEANS OF MEETING PROBLEMS; YET WE ALWAYS USE THEM AS CRUTCHES.

IF THE SAME AMOUNT OF ATTENTION WERE GIVEN TO DEVELOPING SOCIAL OR WORK ABILITIY OR POSITIVE AREAS OF ACHIEVEMENT AS TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, THE ADULT MIGHT BE ABLE TO SUCCEED IN PLACES WHERE NO ONE HAD THOUGHT THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO DO SO.

## IV. THE MENTAL HEALTH APPROACH

IT IS TIME TO TAKE A MENTAL HEALTH APPROACH TO SOME OF THESE SOCIALIZATION SITUATIONS IN WHCIH PERSONS MAY FIND THEMSELVES.

MANY OF THE WELL-KNOWN AUTHORITIES HAVE SUBSTANTIATED THE IDEA THAT SOCIALIZATION MAY BE THE GREATEST PROBLEM WHICH IS FACED BY PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES. MILTON BRUTTEN, CAMILLA ANDERSON, ERNEST SEIGEL, JANET LERNER, AND RALPH REITAN ALL HAVE TALKED ABOUT THE FACT THAT SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE

BEHAVIOR MAY BE THE GREATEST HANDICAP FACED BY PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELF MAY BE ONE OF THE MOST VITAL INGREDIENTS IN PUTTING TOGETHER A MEANINGFUL LIFE.

VIKTOR FRANKL HAS TAUGHT US AN IMPORTANT LESSON, OUT OF HIS BITTER AND CRUEL EXPERIENCES IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP, WHERE HE SAW HIS FAMILY TAKEN TO THE GAS CHAMBERS, HIS PAPERS DESTROYED, HIS LIFE THREATENED. FROM THE ASHES OF THAT HORROR HE EVOLVED THE THEORY THAT MAN IS PROPELLED IN LIFE BY THE NEED FOR MEANING. HE SAID THAT IT IS NOT UP TO US TO QUESTION LIFE BUT, INSTEAD, TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE ARE THE ONES WHO ARE QUESTIONED --- QUESTIONED BY LIFE. IT IS UP TO US TO ANSWER, BY ANSWERING FOR LIFE.

IT IS IN THAT SENSE OF SELF-RESPONSIBILITY AND OF THE NEED FOR ANSWERING FOR LIFE THAT WE SOMETIMES FORGET.

THE STORY IS TOLD OF A YOUNG MAN WHOSE OLDER BROTHER BECAME QUITE WEALTHY. IN FACT, IN HIS EXPANSIVENESS, HE BOUGHT THE YOUNGER BROTHER A NEW AND BEAUTIFUL CAR. THE YOUNGER BROTHER DROVE IT TO TOWN THE FIRST DAY HE HAD IT AND PARKED IT. A LITTLE NEWSBOY RAN UP TO ASK HIM TO BUY A PAPER. THEN THE NEWSBOY RAN ONE GRIMY FINGER OVER THE CHROME AND SAID, "WOW, WHAT A WONDERFUL CAR. WHERE DID YOU GET IT?"

THE OWNER REPLIED, "MY BROTHER GAVE IT TO ME."

THE NEWSBOY'S MOUTH OPENED WITH A HUGE "O." HE TOUCHED A FENDER AGAIN, LOVINGLY. "WOW," HE REPEATED, "I'D LIKE <u>TO BE</u> A BROTHER LIKE THAT."

WE SOMETIMES FORGET THAT THE L.D. PERSONS HAVE RESPONSIBILITY TO LIFE, TO LEARN THAT RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING A BROTHER "LIKE THAT."

JOHN GARDNER IN HIS FINE BOOK EXCELLENCE, HAS PUT IT THUS: "IN SHORT, EARLY ENVIRONMENT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT. BUT VITAL AS IT IS, WE MUST REMIND OURSELVES THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING AND GROWTH RESTS FINALLY WITH THE INDIVIDUAL. WE CAN RESHAPE THE ENVIRONMENT TO REMOVE OBSTACLES. WE CAN STIMULATE AND CHALLENGE. BUT IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, THE INDIVIDUAL MUST FOSTER HIS OWN DEVELOPMENT. AT ANY AGE, THE CHIEF RESOURCE MUST BE THE INDIVIDUAL'S OWN INTEREST, DRIVE AND ENTHUSIASM FOR SELF-FULFILLMENT."

EVEN IN THIS HE MAY BE HELPED. HE MAY BE AIDED TO RAISE HIS SIGHTS AND TO RECOGNIZE HIS OWN ABILITIES. AND HE MAY BE ASSISTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF VALUES WHICH WILL GIVE MEANING AND DIRECTION TO HIS OWN FULFILLMENT. HAPPINES, DESPITE POPULAR NOTIONS TO THE CONTRARY, IS NOT BEST CONCEIVED AS A STATE IN WHICH ALL ONE'S WISHES ARE SATISFIED AND ALL ONE'S HOPES FULFILLED. FOR MOST HUMAN BEINGS, HAPPINESS IS MORE SURELY FOUND IN STRIVING TOWARD MEANINGFUL GOALS. AND EACH PERSON HAS TO UNDERTAKE SUCH GOALS FOR HIMSELF. SELF-RESPONSIBILITY IS OUR FIRST GOAL.

LET'S LOOK AT POSITIVE WAYS IN WHCIH SOCIALIZATION PROBLEMS CAN BE MET BY PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES. PERHAPS A DIRECT HONESTY WITH STRANGERS IS ONE OF THE METHODS WHICH CAN

BE USED. WE ALL SPEND SO MUCH TIME TRYING TO HIDE WHAT WE CONSIDER ARE NEGATIVE TRUTHS ABOUT OURSELVES THAT WE DO NOT GIVE OTHER PEOPLE THE CHANCE TO RESPOND TO OUR DEMONSTRATED DEFICITS.

LET ME QUOTE FROM A STATEMENT BY DOREEN KRONICK, A GREAT ADVOCATE IN THE FIELD OF LEARNING DISABILITIES, WHEN SHE WROTE ABOUT THE LEARNING DISABLED ADULT.

"ONE HAS TO FOCUS ON THE GENERAL QUALITY OF AN ADULT'S LIFE AND ASK: IS HE ABLE TO FUNCTION EMOTIONALLY AND INSTRUMENTALLY INDEPENDENT OF HIS FAMILY? CAN BE INITIATE AND MAINTAIN CASUAL AND INTIMATE FRIENDSHIPS? ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT SHORT AND LONG-TERM GOALS? BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY, ORGANIZE AND PLAN TIME AND TASK? COPE WITH COMPLEXITY AND STRESS? CAN HE FIND WAYS OF CIRCUMVENTING HIS AREAS OF DIFFICULTY OR OF EXPLAINING TO OTHERS THE ASSISTANCE HE REQUIRES IN WAYS THAT NEITHER ARE ANXIETY PRODUCING TO OTHERS NOR EXCESSIVELY DEMANDING?

"MOST OF US, BE WE L.D. OR NOT, SPEND MUCH OF OUR ADULT LIVES WORKING ON ACQUIRING OR IMPROVING THE BEHAVIORS WHICH SIGNIFY MATURE, PRODUCTIVE, SATISFYING ADULTHOOD."

MORE AND MORE PEOPLE IN A NUMBER OF FIELDS ARE BEGINNING TO RECOGNIZE THE TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS AND FEELINGS OF SELF-WORTH. DR. ERIK FROMM HAS SAID THAT WE CANNOT BEGIN TO LOVE OTHER PEOPLE UNTIL WE FIRST LEARN TO LOVE OURSELVES. HIS STATEMENT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH NARCISSISM, BUT, INSTEAD, DEALS WITH OUR ABILITY TO

EXAMINE OURSELVES HONESTLY, TO SEE OUR STRENGTHS AND OUR WEAKNESSES, TO ACCEPT OURSELVES AS WE ARE AND THEN TO BE ABLE TO REACH OUT TO OTHERS, WITH COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING, FOR THEIR FOIBLES AND PROBLEMS.

WHETHER ADULTS WHOM WE ARE DISCUSSING ARE SUCCESSFUL MAY WELL DEPEND NOT SO MUCH ON THEIR SKILL WITH COMPUTERS AS WITH THEIR SKILL WITH HUMAN BEINGS. THE FACT OF LIFE REMAINS THAT THE ABILITY TO LOVE PROBABLY REMAINS THE GREATEST NEED OF EVERY HUMAN BEING. WITHOUT IT, LIVES ARE EMPTY AND SUCCESS IS MEANINGLESS. THE SUPPORT SYSTEM OF CARING OTHERS IS UNPARALLELED IN OUR HUMAN EXISTENCE.

LEARNING TO COPE IS SOMETHING WE ALL MUST DISCOVER. FOR ANYONE WITH A DISABILITY SUCH COPING MAY DRAIN OUR PSYCHE ENERGY.

WHAT DOES THE FIELD OF MENTAL HEALTH TEACH US ABOUT PREVENTION OF MAJOR PROBLEMS SUCH AS MARRIAGE OR JOB FAILURE, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, OR, EVEN, SUICIDE?

WE KNOW THAT THESE NEGATIVE RESPONSES EVOLVE FROM LACK OF SELF-CONCEPT, SELF-CONFIDENCE, & SELF-RESPECT.

WE KNOW THAT, IN THE VIKTOR FRANKL SENSE, WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHERS AS WELL AS FOR OURSELVES. WE RECOGNIZE THAT INDIFFERENCE & DISCRIMINATION ON THE PART OF ENOUGH OF US CAN CHANGE SOCIETY.

THAT IS THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON.

ON THE LIGHT SIDE, WE FIND STRATEGIES WHICH HELP.

THIS FACT THAT HUMAN TOUCH IS VITAL TO LIFE HAS BEEN

DRAMATICALLY BROUGHT TO AATTENTION BY STUDIES OF SOME ORPHANS AND OF SOME OLD PERSONS IN INSTITUTIONS. THE ORPHANS WERE KEPT WARM, KEPT FED, KEPT COMFORTABLE. HOWEVER, THERE WAS NOT TIME IN THIS ORPHANAGE FOR THE GENTLE TOUCHING, CARESSING, COOING, AND OTHER STIMULI FOR THE CHILDREN. BY THE TIME THESE INFANTS WERE TWO YEARS OLD, THEY STILL DID NOT HAVE SPEECH AND WERE NOT WALKING. WITHOUT THAT HUMAN OUTREACH, THEY WERE SMALL AUTOMATONS WHO COULD DO MECHANICAL ACTS BUT WHO COULD NOT REACH OUT AND LOVE BECAUSE THEY HAD NOT BEEN REACHED FOR IN THAT SAME LOVING FASHION. SIMILAR REACTIONS OCCUR DAILY IN NURSING HOMES WHERE ELDERLY PEOPLE, UNTOUCHED AND UNNOTICED, CONTINUE TO WITHDRAW INTO CAVERNS OF ISOLATION.

WE ALL NEED TO KNOW THE JOYS OF GENTLENESS AND KINDNESS. WE ALL NEED TO BELIEVE THAT LOVE IS REAL AND THAT PEOPLE CAN BE LOVED DESPITE MISTAKES OR DISABILITIES. WE NEED TO SHOW BY OUR ACTIONS AND BY OUR EXAMPLES THAT WHAT WE VALUE MOST IN LIFE IS THE LOVING OUTREACH WHICH PEOPLE GIVE TO ONE ANOTHER.

FEW OF US OBTAIN OUR TOTAL PACKAGE OF DREAMS. WE LEARN TO COMPROMISE. WE CAN DO SO IF WE REGARD OURSELVES AS WORTH-WHILE HUMAN BEINGS, IF WE HAVE LEARNED TO LOVE OURSELVES AND OTHERS. WE CAN THEN MEET ADVERSITY, ILLNESS, AND AGING WITH A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE.

AN ELOQUENT STATEMENT WAS MADE BY A YOUNG FRIEND OF OURS WHO HAS SUFFERED SERIOUS MENTAL PROBLEMS.

THIS IS WHAT SHE WROTE IN A LETTER A FEW YEARS AFTER SHE

WAS MARRIED. SHE SAID, "I STILL THINK I KNOW WHAT I WANT, MY FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD CHOICES, THEY'RE VERY SIMPLE, AND I THINK I CAN DEFINE THEM, TOO:

"MY FIRST CHOICE WOULD BE TO GET BACK THAT INTEREST IN THINGS I ALWAYS HAD BUT LOST GRADUALLY, AND TO BE ABLE TO READ AND LEARN ENOUGH SO THAT I'D HAVE SOMETHING TO WRITE ABOUT -- AND THEN TO TRY IT.

"IF I CAN'T HAVE THAT, IF I AM TO GET SICK FROM TIME TO TIME, I'D STILL LIKE TO TRY (AND WANT TO TRY) WHEN I CAN, TO DO WHAT I DECIDED BACK IN 3RD GRADE I WANTED TO DO MOST (THIS A MODIFIED # NO. 1).

"IF THAT, TOO, IS IMPOSSIBLE, I'D AT LEAST LIKE TO STAY WELL ENOUGH TO BE HAPPY AT HOME AND TO BE INTERESTED IN TAKING CARE OF MYSELF, MY HUSBAND AND OUR HOUSE. THAT WOULD BE A GREAT IMPROVEMENT OVER MUCH OF THE LAST FEW YEARS AND MANY PREVIOUS YEARS, TOO.

"IN ANY CASE I'D LIKE TO MAKE SOME MORE FRIENDS AND LEARN HOW NOT TO FRIGHTEN MOST OF THEM AWAY.

"I DON'T WANT TO ASK FOR THINGS THAT ARE IMPOSSIBLE, AND I WILL BE GRATEFUL IF I CAN JUST BE HAPPY DOING THOSE LAST FEW THINGS."

IF WE LOOK AT HER VERY LAST SENTENCES, I THINK SHE HAS SUMMED UP THE PHILOSOPHY WHICH ALL OF US NEED TO TRY TO OBTAIN --- NOT TO ASK FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE, BUT TO BE HAPPY DOING WHAT WE CAN. WE CAN BE HAPPY IN SO DOING WHEN WE HAVE THE SENSE OF OUR OWN SELVES AND CONTENTMENT WITH THE REALISTIC APPRAISAL OF

WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE WANT TO LIVE.

THE PHILOSOPHY WHICH I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DISCUSS STATED BY ROLLO MAY IN LOVE AND WILL HE PUT IT THUS:

"WE LOVE AND WILL THE WORLD AS AN IMMEDIATE, SPONTANEOUS TOTALITY. WE WILL THE WORLD, CREATE IT BY OUR DECISION, OUR FIAT, OUR CHOICE: AND WE LOVE IT, GIVE IT AFFECT, ENERGY, POWER TO LOVE AND CHANGE US AS WE MOLD AND CHANGE IT. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FULLY RELATED TO ONE'S WORLD."

LET ME END WITH A STORY.

A GRADE SCHOOL CLASS WAS STUDYING ASTRONOMY. THE ASSIGNMENT GIVEN BY THE TEACHER TO THE CLASS WAS FOR EACH OF THEM TO GO HOME, TO LIE OUT IN THE BACK YARD THAT NIGHT AND TO SEE HOW MANY STARS THEY COULD COUNT.

THE NEXT DAY SHE BEGAN TO ASK THE YOUNGSTERS IF THEY HAD COMPLETED THE ASSIGNMENT. FIRST SHE TALKED TO SUSIE, ASKING HER HOW MANY STARS SHE HAD COUNTED. "TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO," SAID SUSIE PROUDLY. "WONDERFUL," ANSWERED THE TEACHER. "AND YOU, WILLIE?" WILLIE HAD COUNTED TWO HUNDRED AND ONE; HELEN, TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN; BILL, ONE HUNDRED NINETY-SIX."

FINALLY THE TEACHER CAME TO JOHNNY. "I COUNTED SIXTY-EIGHT," JOHNNY REPLIED.

"SIXTY-EIGHT? THAT'S ALL? WHY DID YOU FIND SO MANY FEWER THAN THE OTHER CHILDREN DID?"

"WELL, TEACHER," JOHNNY SAID, "YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT

WE HAVE A VERY SMALL BACK YARD."

IT IS MY HOPE THAT ALL OF US WILL HELP OUR L.D. ADULTS DEVELOP LARGE YARDS OF UNDERSTANDING SO THAT THEY CAN SEE THE BOUQUETS OF LOVE, ACHIEVEMENT, AND CONCERN, AND CAN HELP TO TRANSMIT THE CULTURE AND THE SENSE OF LIFE'S FULL MEANING.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.